

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

ARMED WITH INFORMATION: EVOLVING PUBLIC AFFAIRS TO
DELIVER OPERATIONAL EFFECTS

by

Thomas A. Knowles, Major, USAF

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Advisor: Lt Col Diane Ficke

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In light of the pervasive nature of real-time global news, the perceptions as delivered via the media and other emerging communication mediums are increasingly influencing foreign and domestic public opinion and the policymaking process. Its within this context, the U.S. military must come to understand and embrace the operational potential inherent in leveraging information and related public affairs (PA) capabilities as a crucial weapon to be employed on the battleground of public opinion. Despite its enormous potential, steps must be taken to increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards. Without question, kinetic capabilities are still relevant in 21st century warfare, but represent only part of the solution. Military success in wielding information for operational effect will increasingly depend upon our ability to move forward on many fronts, to include evolving PA operations designed to preempt or counter adversary disinformation. Throughout this paper I will use the problem-solution research methodology to examine the need to evolve PA operations beyond prevailing norms and standards to address todays security challenges and related global information-age realities. I will begin this discussion by examining the military implications of globalization. This discussion will be followed by an examination of the evolving nature of conflict and character of warfare throughout the history of warfare. Having explored these topics, this discussion will be followed by an examination of the impact of technology on current military operations. Having analyzed these factors and associated evidence supporting my thesis, the paper concludes by recommending a cross-disciplined effort among PA, Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Public Diplomacy (PD) to increase operational efficiencies designed to achieve strategic communication objectives in the 21st century military operational environment. This recommendation would be accomplished by implementing a two pronged approach. First, the development of a Joint Information Effects Cell (JIEC) within each Combatant Command is recommended to increase prevailing communication planning efforts. Doing so would increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards required to successfully accomplish combatant commander strategic communication objectives. Second, embedding a JIEC liaison cell within the Joint Force Commanders (J-3) Operations Center is also recommended. Doing so would achieve the speed, cooperation and collaboration necessary to influence target audiences and counter adversary efforts to manipulate the information domain.

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Abstract

In light of the pervasive nature of real-time global news, the perceptions as delivered via the media and other emerging communication mediums are increasingly influencing foreign and domestic public opinion and the policymaking process. It's within this context, the U.S. military must come to understand and embrace the operational potential inherent in leveraging information and related public affairs (PA) capabilities as a crucial weapon to be employed on the battleground of public opinion. Despite its enormous potential, steps must be taken to increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards. Without question, kinetic capabilities are still relevant in 21st century warfare, but represent only part of the solution. Military success in wielding information for operational effect will increasingly depend upon our ability to move forward on many fronts, to include evolving PA operations designed to preempt or counter adversary disinformation.

Throughout this paper I will use the problem-solution research methodology to examine the need to evolve PA operations beyond prevailing norms and standards to address today's security challenges and related global information-age realities. I will begin this discussion by examining the military implications of globalization. This discussion will be followed by an examination of the evolving nature of conflict and character of warfare throughout the history of warfare. Having explored these topics, this discussion will be followed by an examination of the impact of technology on current military operations. Having analyzed these factors and associated evidence supporting my thesis, the paper concludes by recommending a cross-disciplined effort among PA, Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Public Diplomacy (PD) to increase operational efficiencies designed to achieve strategic communication objectives in the

21st century military operational environment. This recommendation would be accomplished by implementing a two pronged approach. First, the development of a Joint Information Effects Cell (JIEC) within each Combatant Command is recommended to increase prevailing communication planning efforts. Doing so would increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards required to successfully accomplish combatant commander strategic communication objectives. Second, embedding a JIEC liaison cell within the Joint Force Commanders (J-3) Operations Center is also recommended. Doing so would achieve the speed, cooperation and collaboration necessary to influence target audiences and counter adversary efforts to manipulate the information domain.

Chapter 1

Introduction

To maintain information dominance, we must commit to improving our ability to influence target audiences and manipulate our adversary's information environment. Continued development of these capabilities is essential.

—General Tommy Franks

Throughout this paper I will address the need to evolve prevailing PA norms and standards to effectively employ information capabilities to achieve operational effects throughout the full spectrum of military conflict. This discussion will begin by examining the evolution of the post Cold-War international security environment and the impact of globalization and the drastic change in the nature and range of military operations. Today's military operations are increasingly being played out in a wide variety of dynamic and challenging environments ranging from low intensity conflict against armed insurgencies employing terrorist tactics to humanitarian and stability operations. This has become an even greater concern in light of the emergence of the information revolution of the 90's.¹

The information revolution has provided the means to enable increasing opportunities and asymmetric advantages for non-state actors and rogue nations to wield enormous effect, thereby leveling the playing field against great powers. In this new era, modern global communication technologies and real-time international media coverage have emerged as distinctive new warfighting capabilities, with profound implications for national security. Within this context, it's reasonable to conclude the military's growing involvement in conflicts

waged for less than national survival will be placed under greater scrutiny, with public support playing an integral role in the success or failure of the overall intended political objectives. Unfortunately, the prevailing norms and standards for PA operations have failed to evolve military PA operations beyond past practices to address today's security challenges and associated global information age realities. As the traditional employment of conventional hard military power decreases, the asymmetric employment of information as a warfighting capability will become increasingly important. A failure to evolve PA operations to address the 21st century military operational environment will result in missed opportunities to deliver operational effects necessary to accomplish national security objectives.

Success in this changing strategic context will thus require more than military might alone to achieve desired end states, with the achievement of national policy objectives increasingly dependent upon personnel armed with information versus iron and lead. Within this context, PA operations have never been a more integral part of warfighting. Without question, kinetic capabilities are still relevant in 21st century warfare, but represent only part of the solution. Military success in wielding information for operational effect will increasingly depend upon our ability to move forward on many fronts, to include evolving PA operations designed to preempt or counter adversary disinformation. Unfortunately, little beyond lip service has been paid to evolve military PA operations beyond past practices to address today's security challenges and associated global information age realities. Now more than ever steps must be taken to increase organizational efficiencies, thereby achieving the speed and synergies necessary to anticipate and thwart adversary efforts to manipulate the information domain.

Doing so will require evolving prevailing PA norms and standards to effectively employ information capabilities to achieve operational effects throughout the full spectrum of military conflict. The recommendations and conclusions of this paper will present viable solutions to enhance existing practices designed to confront existing threats and maintain our military advantage in the war for public opinion.

Chapter 2

Military Implications of Globalization

There was a time when two oceans seemed to provide protection from problems in other lands, leaving America to lead by example alone. That time has long since passed.

—The 2006 National Security Strategy of America

The unprecedented increased interaction resulting from Globalization has resulted in dramatic implications for current military operations and national security.² While the concept of globalization is not new, the speed and scale of modern communications and transportation modes have emerged to expand the sheer density of global interdependence, distinguishing it from bygone eras. Early examples of the first great era of globalization are traced to European governments, which financed the establishment of trade routes discovered by explorers such as Columbus in 1492.³ Beginning in 1800, the global markets established by Dutch and English multinational companies and the falling costs of transportation made possible by the Industrial Revolution and affordable communication during the later half of the 19th century served to further integrate the world.⁴ The enormous investment in technology, world-wide broadband communications and the Internet during the 90's served as the most recent catalyst for globalization.⁵

Perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of modern globalization is the trend toward empowering individuals. Historically, Western countries and corporate enterprises have driven initiatives to increase globalization to increase power and wealth.⁶ Since 2000, the advent of affordable, off-the-shelf technology and related applications available to the global masses has

created opportunities to empower individuals on a scale previously witnessed throughout history. The trend in global integration and interdependence has resulted in many positive spin-offs. Individuals, large and small businesses and nation states from all corners of the world have become increasingly empowered in what Thomas Friedman has coined a “flattened world.”⁷ According to the 2006 National Security Strategy, “much of the world’s prosperity and improved living standards in recent years derive from the expansion of global trade, investment, information and technology.”⁸ The increased prosperity and increased interdependence of global economies have created powerful incentives for countries to settle disputes peacefully, making the future prospects of sustained interstate conflict unlikely.⁹

During a speech before the Chicago Economic Club, the former-British Prime Minister, Tony Blair summed up the current global environment during the unveiling of his “Doctrine of the International Community” when he pronounced:

We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violence of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the effects of globalization and related communication advances brought about during the 90’s, has also emerged as a double-edged sword. Increased access to new media technologies and sophisticated portable weapons have created conditions ripe for empowering adaptive and dispersed insurgents engaged in the employment of terrorist tactics to prey upon weak and failing states.¹¹ The information revolution has also provided the means to enable increasing opportunities and asymmetric advantages for non-state actors and rogue nations to wield enormous effect in the war for public opinion, thereby leveling the playing field against great powers. In the tradition of Mao’s teachings, adversaries faced with a superior

conventional U.S. military capability increasingly avoid our conventional strengths and exploiting weaknesses at a time and place of their choosing.¹² This has profound implications for democratic nations which rely on public support to conduct operations in support of national political objectives. In this new era, information wielded via modern global communication technologies have emerged as a distinctive new warfighting capability with profound implications for national security.

Chapter 3

The Changing Nature of Military Conflict

Direct military force will continue to play a role in the long-term effort against terrorists and other extremists. But over the long term, the United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory.

—Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates

In an era of global interdependence, the nature of modern conflict has changed dramatically, providing powerful incentives to avoid conventional war. Within this context, previous notions of the “American Way of War,” limited to crushing an adversary’s conventional fielded forces through means of annihilation and attrition, have been rendered largely irrelevant. Today’s geopolitical environment has changed the role of the military to that of serving a variety of political goals short of destroying a nation’s conventional military forces or war making capacity.¹³ Facing the greater vulnerabilities of failed or failing states and the potential threats posed by destabilization, nation states have increasingly found themselves intervening in the previously taboo internal affairs of nation states to diffuse issues, which could quickly lead to global security implications if left unaddressed.¹⁴

Confirming this trend are the preponderance of Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations (SSTR) operations conducted throughout the post-Cold War environment, largely replacing interstate conflict waged between nation states.¹⁵ The prevalence of unconventional conflict in the post-Cold War has emerged to become the mainstay of military operations versus conventional conflicts waged between great nation states. For example, the majority of U.S. military operations ranging from Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia,

Kosovo, Afghanistan and other locales conducted throughout the administrations of George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton and George W. Bush did not involve major combat operations.¹⁶ The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report recognized this emerging mission area by establishing the role of the military in supporting friendly nation states that may be incapable of dealing with internal threats of insurgent led terrorism.¹⁷ This new military role is further articulated by the establishment of DoD Directive 300.05 on SSTR, establishing stability operations as a core DoD mission with priority comparable to combat operations. To quote the 2002 National Security Strategy, “the United States is now more threatened by weak and failing states than we are by conquering ones.”¹⁸ The 2008 stand-up of United States African Command serves to further underscore the emerging emphasis placed upon confronting 21st century challenges characterized by the current nature of warfare.

Considering the U.S. position as the sole military power capable of leading SSTR operations and carrying out UN Security Council mandates involving military intervention, this trend will likely remain the status quo in the foreseeable future.¹⁹ Under these circumstances, it remains unlikely that future military operations will be characterized by the previous experiences of WWII, which Michael Walzer defines as a, “supreme emergency...the supreme condition that permits the resort to any measure that serves to stave off the threatened destruction of the community.”²⁰ With this in mind, it’s reasonable to conclude military operations employed in conflicts waged for less than national survival will be placed under even greater public scrutiny, with information designed to win the war for public opinion playing an integral role in achieving national political objectives. This has profound implications for future the U.S. military which relies on public support to mobilize and conduct operations in support of national political

objectives. In his book *Divining Victory*, William M. Arkin presents evidence highlighting this point. During his interviews with Lebanese citizens following 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, an observer of the conflict commented on the changing nature of warfare, “where public opinion counts as much as actual military maneuvers.”²¹

Within this environment, relying exclusively upon conventional forces employing kinetic effects is not a sufficient means to achieving successful outcomes in current and future military operations supporting the Global War on Terror. In addition to the application of traditional warfighting skills, military success will increasingly rely upon the employment of information effects to increase the likelihood of achieving greater operational effectiveness when employing military power in future conflicts. This is especially critical given the preponderance of future SSTR operations will involve counterinsurgency (COIN) operations where the role played by information becomes foremost in mobilizing support of the population to eliminate insurgent sanctuary within the borders of failed or failing states.

Remarking on the importance of the population while conducting unconventional military operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James N. Mattis noted, “this is the kind of war where ammunition at times is better spent...trying to make common cause with the people. This is not a war that can be won purely by military means.”²² Increasing the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome under these new circumstances will require a strategy focused on delivering information effects designed to shape and influence perceptions.²³ Without question, kinetic capabilities are still relevant in 21st century air operations, but represent only part of the solution. Within this context, PA operations have never been a more integral part of warfighting.

Chapter 4

The Evolving Character of War

Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur.

—Guilio Douhet

Throughout history the character of warfare has evolved to create greater complexity in war. Factors ranging from the situation and context of conflict to the evolution of capabilities and technology have served to both empower and constrain military commanders throughout the ages. To increase the likelihood of achieving success, military leaders have evolved prevailing norms and standards to achieve desired political end states. An analysis of historical trends serves to illustrate the evolving character of warfare.

For instance, during the pre-Napoleonic era, the outcome of warfare was often waged for limited political objectives to include the seizure of small parcels of land with a single battle often determining the outcome of war.²⁴ European armies tended to be small and limited in their scope and means to achieve desired end states with tactics typically limited to close order drill to mass troops employing muskets aimed at the opposing force. During the 18th Century, organizational innovations introduced by Napoleon afforded the previously unprecedented decentralized conduct of operations. This evolution in the character of war enabled greater maneuver and speed enabling him to quickly and efficiently overcome opposing armies.²⁵

During the 19th Century, examples ranging from advances associated with mini-balls to muzzle-loading rifles emerged during the American Civil War to expand the effective range of

firearms, serving to frustrate efforts to achieve the climactic decisive battles advocated by Napoleon. During the 20th Century, the world witnessed further technological developments in lethal weaponry, enabling severe losses in personnel and materiel throughout the unforgiving battlegrounds of the trench warfare of World War I (WWI). Dramatic technological advancements ranging from the tank to the machine gun made open maneuver increasingly difficult and served to further evolve the character of war.²⁶

Seeking to avoid the wholesale slaughter and stalemate witnessed throughout WWI, military leaders employed advances in airpower capabilities to overcome and mitigate the constraints of defensive trench warfare. By employing a strategy of long-range strategic bombing during World War II, Airmen were able to bypass massed armies and strike directly at an industrial nation's vital centers. Moreover, the employment of airpower during conflict sought to achieve greater wartime efficiency and reduce the overall duration of conflict.²⁷ The evolution of the post-Cold War international security environment is no exception to this trend evolution of the character of war.

Unlike previous large-scale conventional wars focused on the kinetic destruction of the enemy army and associated infrastructure, success in current operations are increasingly defined by the effective and efficient use of information to win the "battle of ideas." In the 21st century, adversaries unable to match conventional U.S. military forces have increasingly employed modern communication technologies and global media outlets as asymmetric weapons of mass influence. Instead of massing forces through the Fulda Gap, today's enemy attempts to achieve parity with U.S. forces by massing information effects on the battlefield of public opinion. As a result, adversaries can exploit media outlets by transmitting propaganda or disinformation in

hopes of swaying domestic and international support, opinion and resolve.²⁸ The former-Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld underscored this evolving character of warfare by noting:

The conflict we're in is not against a big army or a big navy or a big air force. The United States military is not going to lose a single war or battle or skirmish over in Iraq or Afghanistan. The competition that's taking place, the battle that's taking place is for people's minds, and very much they are convinced that they can affect the will of the American people and the American people's willingness to persist in this effort.

So too, Al-Qaida has media committees. They go out and they plan exactly how they can structure their attacks to have the kind of drama and effect that will be carried worldwide, that will have the effect of intimidating people and persuading people on the one hand that they should not oppose the terrorists, and on the other hand that they should be recruited or contribute money. They can dramatize the success of what they're doing, and that increases the contributions they get from people who support that type of thing. So it is an entirely different environment that we're functioning in, it's a difficult one, and it requires a set of skills that the United States government doesn't have in abundance.²⁹

This evolving character of war is particularly relevant for armed forces serving within democratic societies, where the deployment and continued support of military operations is contingent upon national will throughout all phases of military conflict. Military effectiveness in this changing strategic context will thus require more than military might alone to achieve desired ends states, with success increasingly dependent upon military personnel armed with information versus iron and lead.

Chapter 5

The Influence of Modern Technology on Warfare

Preparing for the future will require us to think differently and develop the kinds of forces and capabilities that can adapt quickly to new challenges and to unexpected circumstances.

—Former-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Serving to facilitate the evolving character of warfare are modern communication technologies. While many positive developments may be attributed to recent advances brought about during the 90's, technology has also acted as a double edged sword serving to empower adaptive and dispersed extremists engaged in the employment of terrorist tactics. Of course, the role played by information on the battlefield is nothing new. Throughout history, military theorists such as Sun Tzu and Clausewitz have noted the influence of information on the conduct of war. While serving with Bedouin tribesmen during the Arab Revolt against the Turks from 1916-1918, the iconic British Colonel T.E. Lawrence was noted for recognizing the printing press as the "...greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander."³⁰

We see the first examples of the role of public support emerge in the 18th century during the French Revolutionary war and the unprecedented mobilization of more than one million French citizens to serve in Napoleon's army. Without the public support of the French population to mobilize the nation for war, Napoleon could not have accomplished the nation's desired political objectives. Playing a vital role in garnering this support was the dramatic proliferation of affordable mass produced print publications enabled by the deregulation of the presses.³¹ The mediums, ranging from newspapers to journals, served as an efficient means to

quickly and effectively communicate with the masses via pictures and print, thereby leveraging civic nationalism to mobilize public support for the Revolution.

Today we're witnessing a similar revolution of communication mediums and related information mediums. Distinguishing the past from the present is the increasing speed, interconnectedness and persistence of global information. The increased availability and persistent nature of web-based communication tools and real-time global media coverage surpasses all previous advancements to mobilize popular support of the global masses at a speed and scale previously unheard of throughout history. For example, as opposed to air operations conducted in the Vietnam war, when it took more than four years for Vietnamese insurgents to have a similar effect on public opinion, today's insurgents are able to have an immediate dialog with global audiences courtesy of the cyber domain.³² Moreover, the accessibility and shock value of this information is ready made for real-time TV broadcast, which the mainstream media eagerly report.

The information revolution has created a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), thus evolving the character war by creating opportunities and asymmetric advantages to achieve enormous effect. Remarking on this, Andrew Krepinevich commented: "[An RMA] occurs when the application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of conflict. It does so by producing a dramatic increase-often an order of magnitude or greater in the combat potential and military effectiveness of armed forces."³³ Empowered by these new means, anyone from a state actor to an individual now has the ability to instantly present ideas and information on a global scale. Unfortunately, these

means have also served a range of nefarious purposes employed by extremists and rogue nations.

Throughout the Global War on Terror, insurgents have increasingly leveraged the asymmetric advantages of the cyber domain as an efficient and effective means to distribute propaganda. For example, Al Qaeda's use of downloadable web-based movies and Internet chat rooms have been used to command and control military operations, recruit terrorist insurgents and inspire violence designed to discredit government legitimacy and authority. Imagery featuring beheadings, improvised-explosive device bombings projected against U.S. forces and online newspapers are also routinely employed to disseminate information with ease that may be accessed by the global masses. This is of particular concern for U.S. forces, increasingly engaged in conducting SSTR operations in a COIN environment where government legitimacy is paramount.³⁴

The revolution in global communications capability has also resulted in the exponential growth of media outlets and accelerated global news cycles. According to former Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye, in today's real-time media environment, "an hour –or even a few minutes-makes the critical difference whether a cable television network is on top of a story or behind the curve."³⁵ Of particular concern is the potential effect these outlets and related coverage have on the opinions of the global community, with implications to potentially shift domestic public opinion and support for military operations. Increasingly we've seen the outcome of post-Cold War conflicts less dependent on how well they're fought on the battlefield, versus how they are perceived in the information domain, with news journalists' wielding great influence in how the world responds.³⁶ What has come to be known as the "Cable News Network effect," has served to illustrate the influence of pervasive media coverage to

increasingly influence public opinion and policymaking.

One of the first wartime examples of the powerful influence of the CNN effect was witnessed during Operation Desert Storm. During this conflict, F-117 stealth fighters struck the Al-Firdus command-and-control bunker resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi civilians. According to the Coalition Force Air Component Commander, General Chuck Horner, the resulting CNN television coverage highlighting dead Iraqi's being removed from the facility resulted in immediate impacts to the air operation.

Targeting in the Baghdad area all but stopped, and General Schwarzkopf began to anguish over every target we nominated, denying approval of most of them. Okay, this change was not in fact hard to accept. Most of the known high-value targets had already been destroyed or heavily damaged, and by then our main thrust had turned to destroying tanks, artillery, and lines of communications in the KTO. But a notion sticks in my throat that someone above the CINC had issued guidance based on fear of public opinion polls.³⁷

With this example in mind, it is reasonable to conclude the careful employment of future military operations will be critical to reduce the potential negative fallout resulting from the perception of indiscriminate destruction and inappropriate application of military power. For instance, despite superior U.S. military capabilities and modern precision guided munitions, military operations will inevitably result in mistakes resulting in collateral damage and civilian deaths. This is especially relevant when conducting operations in a COIN environment where undermining public support is counterproductive to achieving long-term success.³⁸ When collateral damage occurs, insurgents or other non-peer adversaries can be expected to release disinformation or propaganda designed to highlight these missteps and frustrate military operations and political objectives. Adversaries relying on asymmetric means have taken note of this critical vulnerability to counter superior conventional military superiority.

Recent evidence of this strategy was witnessed during the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war. During this conflict, despite possessing a first-rate conventional military capability, the Israeli military was defeated because they failed to understand and adapt to the nature and character of the conflict. Not only did the Israeli military fail to achieve their nation's political objectives, Hezbollah emerged from the conflict well armed and relatively unscathed. Further, Hezbollah won the critical battle for "hearts and minds" by leveraging the asymmetric means of modern communications technologies. International media coverage featuring graphic images of devastation resulting from Israel's air campaign created the perception of disproportionate and indiscriminate destruction waged against the Lebanese people. The effective employment of Hezbollah's information operation (IO) campaign resulted in world-wide criticism of Israeli actions and achieved even greater sympathy and popular support for their cause among the southern Lebanon population. Finally, the perception of victory over Israel's superior military forces likely increased Hezbollah's political legitimacy and served as an effective terrorist recruiting vehicle.³⁹

Given that non-peer adversaries will be unlikely to achieve parity with conventional U.S. military forces in the near future, we can expect future military operations to be increasingly confronted with the employment of similar tactics. This condition demands the attention of military leaders when planning and conducting future operations to ensure the greatest likelihood for success. In his book *Immaculate Warfare*, author Stephen D. Wrage further emphasized this emerging reality of modern warfare by highlighting adversary efforts to employ information to affect world opinion during the air campaign over Kosovo:

...expectations of near perfection in aiming on the part of the American public, international press, and the U.S. Congress left NATO Supreme Commander General

Wesley Clark musing that the only arena in which he could lose the war in a single day was on the television screen. Fearing that major errors might lead the White house, Congress, or NATO allies to terminate Operation Allied Force, he attempted to produce an entirely error-free campaign-a standard of performance seldom required of commanders in past campaigns.⁴⁰

When military errors, resulting in collateral damage, did eventually occur, Belgrade was quick to employ deceptive media tactics designed to highlight coalition shortcomings and influence global perceptions. Such was the case on April 14, 1999 when a coalition pilot mistakenly destroyed a truck carrying refugees near Djakovica. On this and other occasions, Belgrade's IO campaign successfully leveraged the media to distort these missteps, thereby creating a perception of indiscriminate destruction inconsistent with the doctrine of justice in war. Fortunately for the coalition, Belgrade's attempts to win the 'war for public opinion' were ultimately unsuccessful. Nevertheless, a thorough understanding of the lessons drawn from these historical military operations is critical to understanding the conditions which future operations will be conducted. Doing so will increase the likelihood of evolving operations to achieve greater operational effectiveness, given the current nature and character of war.

The necessity to evolve military operations to address the current geopolitical context has not been lost upon our nation's senior leaders. For instance, the '02 U.S. National Security Strategy noted, "...the major institutions of American national security strategy were designed in a different era to meet different requirements. All of them must be transformed."⁴¹ Since that time the Department of Defense (DoD) has been slow to embrace change, instead emphasizing preparation for traditional conventional large-scale wars versus smaller unconventional conflicts our forces currently find themselves engaged. Unfortunately, this trend has extended to the PA

career field, which has failed to evolve beyond prevailing norms and standards to address today's security challenges and associated global information-age realities.

For instance, in an era which presumably necessitates increased emphasis on strategic communication and associated personnel, the USAF has conducted significant PA manpower reductions. The 2006-2007 cuts, resulting from Presidential Budget Decision 720, created a 48 percent manpower reduction since 2005, with commissioned active-duty personnel figures falling from 470 to 246.⁴² Amidst these staggering reductions and increased operational requirements, the PA community has found themselves challenged to fulfill even the most basic requirements. This disturbing trend ignores the scope which PA capabilities contribute to the success of current military operations in the global information environment. This is particularly true in democratic societies where the deployment and continued support of military operations is contingent upon national will throughout all phases of a conflict. Engrossed in daily tasks and requests for information, busy and understaffed PA officials rarely have time for serious thought about the future beyond the next crisis. Incapable of meeting the demands placed upon them, PA operations have become increasingly inefficient, untimely and incapable of producing relevant information-effects.

Beyond correcting existing manpower shortcomings, fully realizing the operational potential of PA capabilities will require a new framework to create a capability that is relevant on the 21st century battlefield. The speed of information enabled by modern technology demands the evolution of PA norms and standards to achieve the speed and synergies required to win the war for public opinion. Developing this capability to frame the public debate and mitigate setbacks resulting from adversary efforts to manipulate the cognitive battlespace will ensure

military forces maintain the freedom of action to conduct operations designed to achieve national security objectives.

Chapter 6

Recommendations and Conclusions

The epitome of skill is to defeat your enemy without physically engaging him in battle.

—Sun Szu

Evolving existing PA operational norms and standards to address today's security challenges and related global information-age realities will require moving beyond outdated concepts and reactive Cold War era practices of the past. Doing otherwise risks failure to meet existing operational conditions, thereby becoming an increasingly irrelevant player among joint military operations. Moving beyond prevailing norms and standards will require a cross-disciplined effort among PA, Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Public Diplomacy (PD) to increase operational efficiencies designed to achieve strategic communication.

This recommendation would be accomplished by implementing a two pronged approach. First, the development of a Joint Information Effects Cell (JIEC) within each Combatant Command is recommended to increase prevailing communication planning efforts. Doing so would increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards required to successfully accomplish combatant commander strategic communication objectives. The establishment of JIEC would also ensure functional area activities are conducted in an integrated and cohesive fashion directed toward achieving the Combatant Commander and JFC operational objectives. While the traditional means of coordinating and de-conflicting these functional areas may have suited a bygone era, remaining relevant in today's global information environment demands moving beyond outdated concepts and reactive practices of the past. In short, PA practices must

evolve to realize the speed and synergy required to effectively wage the war for public opinion. This is underscored by the increasing importance senior leaders have placed upon the role strategic communication plays in achieving success on the 21st century battlefield. For example, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report specifically states, “Victory in the long war ultimately depends on strategic communication,” marking the first such occasion which strategic communication was featured in a national strategy document.⁴³ The days of woefully fragmented efforts of stove-piped agencies, performing redundant missions under the guise of different names, must evolve to reflect the new realities of a new era where time is now measured in milliseconds required to transmit data and imagery across global distances.

Developing this type of capability is not a “pick-up” game than can presumably be addressed during combat among the fog and friction of war. Historically, commanders typically fail to recognize the importance of PA capabilities until a crisis has developed and it’s too late. Furthermore, planning is an area which PA operations have been sorely lacking. Operations are primarily conducted in reaction to the latest crisis, with little thought given to the proactive development of a comprehensive strategy designed to achieve long-term desired information effects. While the long lead times of a bygone era might have permitted such a practice, the dynamic conditions and compressed timelines of the 21st century combat environment demands evolving existing practices. Realizing a sound operational concept and plan within this complex operating environment requires the employment of a campaign design approach as currently embodied within the Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP).

The employment of a JIEC would mitigate this shortcoming by facilitating the collaboration and development of sound operational concepts and communication plans among

PA, PSYOP and PD functional areas of expertise. Further, by employing an effects-based operational planning model, PA, PSYOP and PD planners could determine the appropriate arrangement or phasing of several disparate lines of operations and visually depict strategic communication activities in time and space. This process would enable the visualization of how an entire operation will be conducted in time and space. The visual arrangement of distinct phases would also assist planners in identifying potential decision points leading to the transition of the next phase of an operation or strategic campaign, further assisting the development of a sound operational concept and strategic communication plan. The end result would ensure all activities are coordinated and employed to achieve desired effects across the range of military operations. Moreover, employing such a planning construct will enable PA, PSYOP and PD planners to link strategic communication activities to achieve synergy and unity of effort throughout all national instruments of power, ultimately creating a “whole of government” approach to strategic communication planning. By incorporating all aspects of the strategic communication campaign, planners would be capable of easily identifying strengths and weaknesses in the linkages of tactical, operational and strategic operations designed to accomplish the national strategic end state. Overall, the leveraging of these respective functional areas of expertise would facilitate a coordinated planning process to increase organizational efficiencies.

Second, embedding a JIEC liaison cell within the Joint Force Commanders (J-3) Operations Center or Joint Force Air Component Commanders Air Operations Center during major combat operations is also recommended. Doing so would achieve the speed, cooperation and collaboration necessary to influence target audiences and counter adversary efforts to

manipulate the information domain. Despite U.S. technological superiority and modern precision guided munitions, military operations will inevitably result in collateral damage and civilian deaths resulting in negative implications. Further, the speed of information in modern conflict will require real-time collaboration to maintain the information edge over potential adversaries.

In an era of accelerated global media, preserving the capacity to deliver proactive, timely information in this environment is critical to maintaining public support and avoiding potential setbacks resulting from adversary propaganda and disinformation campaigns. By releasing disinformation or propaganda to global media outlets regarding these events, adversaries will attempt to drive a wedge between the public and coalition military forces. To quote from Joint PA doctrine, “Gaining and maintaining the information initiative in a conflict can help discredit and undermine enemy propaganda. The first side that presents the information sets the context and frames the public debate.”⁴⁷

A lack of speed, flexibility and agility to present timely, truthful and accurate public information within this environment can have direct negative implications. Illustrating this point, W. Hays Parks noted, “Disinformation promoted by the enemy solidifies into irrefutable fact if not immediately rebutted.”⁴⁸ Embedding a JIEC liaison cell within would provide a joint capability to collaborate in the production and distribution of tactical-level information products designed to influence target audiences and counter adversary misinformation or hostile propaganda campaigns. The close collaboration of this organizational construct would also reduce the likelihood of transmitting conflicting or inaccurate messages which could result in diminished credibility. Furthermore, such an arrangement would enable PA operations to

become fully integrated into the operations. Doing so would increase overall situational awareness required to facilitate the development of proactive courses of action and appropriate branches and sequels necessary to shape the information battlespace and enhance ongoing or future military operations.

The capabilities and potential political consequences resulting from the asymmetric use of information to elevate an issue on a global scale within seconds cannot be underestimated. Unable to match U.S. conventional military strength, adversaries will increasingly attempt to exploit the asymmetric means of modern media technologies and international news outlets to exploit these mistakes or transmit propaganda in hopes of swaying domestic and international support, opinion and resolve. The establishment of an embedded JIEC capability is critical to ensuring the speed and synergy necessary to mitigate adversary efforts to manipulate the information domain and accomplish JFC objectives.

Conclusion

The central problem addressed throughout this paper is the need to evolve prevailing PA norms and standards to effectively employ information capabilities to achieve operational effects in the current information environment. As we've seen throughout recent history, the evolution in the nature of conflict and character of war have created conditions where military success is increasingly defined by the ability effectively and efficiently leverage information as weapon designed to win the war for public opinion. In particular, the 21st century security environment, enabled by the information revolution of the 90's, has resulted in dramatic changes in global threats while aiding in the transformation of our military capabilities. Unlike the past, successfully achieving today's military objectives is less dependent upon winning in the classic

military sense, as it is about shaping perceptions and influencing the behavior of friends and adversaries. Finding a new approach which integrates information and kinetic military capabilities is the key to ensuring the successful accomplishment of national objectives within the current geopolitical context.

As the traditional employment of conventional hard military power decreases, the use of information will become increasingly important to counter disinformation and shape perceptions necessary to ensure public support of military operations. Without question, kinetic capabilities are still relevant in 21st century warfare, but represent only part of the solution. Military success in wielding information for operational effect will increasingly depend upon our ability to move forward on many fronts, to include evolving PA operations designed to counter threats posed in this new domain.

Unfortunately, the military has been slow to recognize the Revolution in Military Affairs made possible by modern communication technologies and the expanding combat role played by information in the battle of ideas. All too often the U.S. military reflexively reaches for a “hammer” without first considering a more holistic approach to imposing the nations will upon an adversary. What has become known as the “American Way of War” has become a predictable established pattern which strives to achieve the climactic decisive battle, seeking to swiftly annihilate enemy forces in a single engagement. To date, Napoleonic military strategies continue to dominate U.S. military thought and actions on the battlefield. Moreover, little beyond lip service has been paid by the PA community to evolve operations beyond prevailing norms and standards necessary to leverage the enormous potential of this modern warfighting capability. The DoD can work towards overcoming these shortcomings by evolving the public

affairs career field to employ a cross-disciplined effort leveraging PA, PSYOP and PD to effectively achieve strategic communication objectives in the 21st century military operational environment. Furthermore, creating a JIEC will increase the effectiveness of prevailing PA norms and standards required to address the current information environment and accomplish combatant commander strategic communication objectives.

Notes

- ¹ Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines*, 147
- ² The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 2006, 47
- ³ Friedman, *The World is Flat*, 9
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 9
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 6
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 11
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 7
- ⁸ DoD, 2006 National Security Strategy, 47
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 11
- ¹⁰ Blair, "The Blair Doctrine," A News Hour with Jim Lehrer Transcript, 22 April 1999, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/jan-june99/blair_doctrine4-23.html (accessed 4 February 2009).
- ¹¹ Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines*, 146-147
- ¹² Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup With a Knife*, 24
- ¹³ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 115
- ¹⁴ DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians*, 13
- ¹⁵ Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines*, 144
- ¹⁶ DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians*, 1
- ¹⁷ The Department of Defense, *The Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 6 February 2006, 12
- ¹⁸ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, 7
- ¹⁹ Mingst, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*, 125
- ²⁰ Wraage, *Immaculate Warfare*, 88
- ²¹ Arkin, *Devining Victory*, 71
- ²² Mattis, "Nominee to be Next USJFCOM Commander Testifies Before Senate Armed Services Committee," Joint Forces Command news article, 27 September 2007, <http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2007/pa092707.htm> (accessed 4 February 2009).
- ²³ Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup With a Knife*, 19
- ²⁴ Crevald, *Command in War*, 60-61
- ²⁵ Hurley, *Billy Mitchell Crusader for Air Power*, 39
- ²⁶ Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, 133
- ²⁷ Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes*, 57
- ²⁸ Scales, "Clausewitz and World War IV," *Armed Forces Journal*, July 2006, 19
- ²⁹ Rumsfeld, "Transcript: Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's Speech on the Future of Iraq," *Washington Post*, 5 December 2005. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/05/AR2005120501248_pf.html (accessed 6 February 2009).
- ³⁰ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 76
- ³¹ Lawrence, *The Art of War in World History*, 885
- ³² Darton and Roche, *The New Face of News: Revolution in Print*, 147
- ³³ Krepinevich, *Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions*, 30
- ³⁴ Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 437
- ³⁵ Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*, 88
- ³⁶ Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 222
- ³⁷ Clancy, *Every Man a Tiger*, 589
- ³⁸ Corum, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, 437
- ³⁹ Arkin, *Devining Victory*, 156-157
- ⁴⁰ Wraage, *Immaculate Warfare*, 91
- ⁴¹ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, 29
- ⁴² McDew, Darren, Maj. Gen., "Public affairs, strategic communications merge," *Air Force Times*, 18 November 2008. http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2008/11/airforce_public_affairs_111708w/ (accessed 6 February 2009)
- ⁴³ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 6 February 2006, 91.
- ⁴⁴ Joint Publication 3-61. Public Affairs, 9 May 2005, I-4

⁴⁵ Parks, Crossing the Line, 52

Glossary

CINC	Commander in Chief
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DoD	Department of Defense
IO	Information Operations
JFC	Joint Force Commander
JIB	Joint Information Bureau
JIEC	Joint Information Effects Cell
JOPP	Joint Operation Planning Process
KTO	Kuwait Theater of Operations
PA	Public Affairs
PD	Public Diplomacy
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SSTR	Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations
UN	United Nations
USAF	United States Air Force
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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